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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 OMB-01 EURE-00
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H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 /073 W
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O R 141827Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0570
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL BORDEAUX
AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG
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CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: FR, PINT
SUBJ: RESULTS OF FIRST ROUND -- MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

SUMMARY: FIRST ROUND RESULTS OF NATIONWIDE MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS CONFIRMED ELECTORAL GAINS OF THE LEFT WHO OBTAINED ABOUT 51-52 PERCENT OF THE VOTE ON A NATIONWIDE BASIS COMPARED WITH ABOUT 46-47 PERCENT FOR THE MAJORITY PARTIES. TWICE AS MANY VOTERS PARTICIPATED IN YESTERDAY'S VOTING AS COMPARED WITH LAST SPRING'S CANTONAL ELECTIONS, AND ALTHOUGH THE ELECTIONS ARE NOT COMPARABLE, THE 51-52 PERCENT LEFT POLLING STRENGTH SHOWS A CERTAIN
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DEGREE OF VOTER STABILITY FOR THE UNION OF THE LEFT. BOTH SOCIALIST AND COMMUNIST PARTIES DID WELL IN THE VOTING. AS EXPECTED, THE MAJORITY SUFFERRED CONSIDERABLE SETBACKS, LOSING 32 LARGE CITIES TO THE LEFT (WHILE WINNING BACK ONLY 3) WITH MORE LOSSES EXPECTED IN THE RUN-OFF ELECTIONS TO BE HELD MARCH 20. CENTER AND INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN PARTIES WERE PARTICULARLY HARD

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HIT, WITH SEVERAL CENTRIST PERSONALITIES LOSING OUT-
RIGHT. THE RPR ALSO SUFFERED LOSSES, BUT BECAUSE OF THE
STRONG SHOWING OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER CHIRAC IN PARIS,
THE RPR HAS SALVAGED AT LEAST A PSYCHOLOGICAL BOOST.
END SUMMARY

L. THE FIRST ROUND RESULTS OF NATIOWIDE MUNICIPAL BALLOT-
ING CONFIRMED THE ELECTORAL GAINS MADE BY THE UNITED
LEFT IN LAST YEAR'S CANTONAL ELECTIONS. WITH 77 PERCENT
OF THE ELIGIBLE ELECTORATE PARTICIPATING, PRELIMINARY
FIGURES INDICATE THAT THE UNION OF THE LEFT RECEIVED
51-52 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL NATIONAL VOTE. AMONG THE 221
LARGE CITIES (OVER 30,000 POPULATION) THE LEFT WON FIRST-
ROUND VICTORIES IN THIRTY-TWO PREVIOUSLY MAJORITY-HELD
CITIES, INCLUDING ANGERS, BREST, CHERBOURG, EPINAL, AND
REIMS, AND ARE EXPECTED TO WIN IN A GOOD MANY OTHERS IN
NEXT SUNDAY'S SECOND-ROUND RUNOFFS. BY COMPARISON, THE
MAJORITY WON FIRST-ROUND VICTORIES IN ONLY THREE PRE-
VIOUSLY LEFT-CONTROLLED CITIES, QUIMPER, CAMBRAI, AND
MAUBEUGE; AND IN THE LATTER TWO, THERE WERE VERY SPECIAL
CIRCUMSTANCES. IN CAMBRAI THE OUTGOING SOCIALIST MAYOR
HAD WITHDRAWN FROM THE RACE AND RESIGNED FROM THE PARTY
FOLLOWING HIS REFUSAL TO FORM A UNION LIST WITH
COMMUNISTS; IN MAUBEUGE, THE INCUMBENT WAS AN EX-SOCIAL-
IST WHO HAD RALLIED MEMBERS OF THE MAJORITY TO HIS LISTS
AND WAS RUNNING AGAINST A LEFT UNION CHALLENGER.

2. OVERALL THE CENTER PARTIES (RADICAL SOCIALISTS, CENTER
FOR SOCIAL DEMOCRATS) DID RATHER POORLY. SEVERAL CDS
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PERSONALITIES (ANDRE DILIGENT, BERNARD STASI) WERE DE-
FEATED OUTRIGHT, AND AT LEAST TWO RS GOVERNMENT MINISTERS
(MICHEL DURAFOUR, PIERRE BROUSSE) ARE THREATENED WITH
SECOND-ROUND DEFEATS. CHIRAC'S RPR ALSO FARED POORLY,
A LOGICAL IMPLICATION OF ITS PARTICIPATION ON UNITED
MAJORITY LISTS, BUT BECAUSE OF THE STRONG SHOWING OF
CHIRAC IN PARIS (SEE SEPTEL), THE PARTY'S LOSSES HAVE
BEEN SOMEWHAT DIMINISHED PSYCHOLOGICALLY.

3. THE ECOLOGY VOTE HAD LITTLE IMPACT ON FIRST ROUND
VOTING, AS ECOLOGY CANDIDATES GAINED ONLY 2-3 PERCENT
OF THE VOTE NATIONWIDE. NEVERTHELESS, IN SOME LOCAL
ELECTIONS, (NICE, GRENOBLE, PARIS) THEY SHOWED PARTICU-
LAR STRENGTH AND WILL BE A CRITICAL FACTOR IN THE MARCH
20 RUNOFF ELECTIONS. IN THOSE CITIES WHERE THEY OB-
TAINED SUFFICIENT VOTES TO REMAIN IN THE SECOND-ROUND
BALLOTING , IT IS NOT YET CLEAR WHETHER THE ECOLOGISTS
WILL STAY IN THE RACES, THEREBY ASSUMING A "SPOILER"
ROLE, WHETHER THEY WILL WITHDRAW IN FAVOR OF A MAJORITY

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OR LEFT CANDIDATE OR LEAVE THEIR VOTERS TO VOTE AS THEY
WISH. ON A NATIONWIDE BASIS, NEITHER THE EXTREME LEFT
NOR MICHEL JOBERT'S MOUVMENT DES DEMOCRATES (MD) OBTAIN-
ED SIGNIFICANT SUPPORT. HOWEVER, IN SEVERAL CITIES, SUCH
AS NANTES AND LE MANS, THE MD VOTES WILL BE CRITICAL IN

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SECOND ROUND BALLOTING.

4. IN THOSE LARGE CITIES WHERE "PRIMARIES" WERE HELD
BETWEEN THE PS AND THE PC, THE PS CAME OUT AHEAD IN
OVER TWO-THIRDS OF THE CONTESTS. AMONG THE MAJORITY
PARTIES PRIMARY RESULTS WERE MORE MIXED, WITH NO CLEAR
TREND EVIDENT, ALTHOUGH THE INDEPENDENT REPUBLICAN CAND-
IDATES DID FARELY WELL, PARTICULARLY IN TOULON (WON BY
THE INCUMBENT IR MAYOR) AND NANCY. WHAT REMAINS TO BE
SEEN IS WHETHER OR NOT THE PARTIES DEFEATED IN THESE

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RESPECTIVE PRIMARIES WILL IN FACT WITHDRAW FROM THE SECOND-ROUND BALLOTING AND SWING THEIR SUPPORT TO THEIR
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LEFT OR MAJORITY ALLIES. THIS TRANSFER OF SUPPORT WILL BE PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT IN SEVERAL CITIES WHERE THE SECOND-ROUND VOTING SHOUDL BE VERY CLOSE BETWEEN THE MAJORITY AND OPPOSITION CANDIDATES, AND WILL BE EVEN MORE IMPORTANT IN VILLEURBANNE, WHERE PS LEADER CHARLES HERNU, WHO HAD REFUSED A JOINT PC/PS LIST, WILL NOW NEED PC SUPPORT TO WIN.

5. NEWS MEDIA HAVE UNIFORMLY UNDERSCORED LEFT ELECTORAL GAINS, ALTHOUGH WITH A FEW EXCEPTIONS, THE ACTUAL FIRST ROUND RESULTS PRODUCED FEW REAL SURPRISES. PARTY LEADERS' COMMENTS WERE PREDICTABLE. INTERIOR MINISTER PONIATOWSKI NOTED THAT LEFT POLLING STRENGTH OF 51-52 PERCENT REFLECTED SLIGHT DECREASE FROM LAST YEAR'S CANTONAL RESULTS AND MAY INDICATE A LEVELLING OFF OF LEFT STRENGTH.(NOTE: TWICE AS MANY VOTERS PARTICIPATED IN YESTERDAY'S ELECTIONS AS IN LAST YEAR'S CANTONALS.) CHIRAC' ON THE OTHER HAND, ACKNOWLEDGED LEFT GAINS AND BLAMED THIS DEVELOPMENT ON DISCORD AND LACK OF LEADER-SHIP AMONG THE MAJORITY PARTIES. ALTHOUGH RPR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY GROUP LEADER CLAUDE LABBE HAS ALREADY PRO-CLAIMED THAT THE RPR WAS THE ONLY MAJORITY PARTY TO BEAT THE LEFT, (E.G. CAMBRAI, QUIMPER) CHIRAC HAS SO FAR BEEN MORE RESTRAINED IN CLAIMING THAT THESE MODEST RESULTS VINDICATE HIS TACTIC OF ELECTORAL BIPOLARIZATION.
GAMMON

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